

BRIEFINGS FROM LEE MORRIS

FULTON COUNTY DISTRICT 3 COMMISSIONER

JUNE 2015

FULTON COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

With the addition of 3 new board members, a new county manager, and a renewed sense of optimism, the Board of Commissioners (BOC) participated in a strategic planning session. The session was held on April 16, 2015 at the Georgia Institute of Technology Hotel and Conference Center and facilitated by Accenture, at no cost to the County.

Accenture helped the BOC in identifying six priorities and a strategy to achieve these goals:

- All residents are healthy
- All residents and visitors are safe
- All residents are self-sufficient
- All residents have economic opportunities
- All residents' and visitors' lives are culturally and recreationally enriched
- All residents trust government is efficient, effective, and fiscally sound

With the above in mind, the BOC approved the implementation of a shared services and/or centralization of certain internal functions in Fulton County.

The purpose is to streamline service delivery with reduced staffing while increasing service to both internal and external customers. Fulton County currently has 38 departments, and employees within these departments perform functions that are duplicated in the Finance Department, the Department of Information Technology, the Purchasing Department, and the Personnel Department. The plan is to centralize these services by restructuring or reorganizing existing staff, including the establishment of new positions as necessary.

Implementation of this plan should yield a savings of approximately \$800,000.



All People are healthy



All People are safe



All People are self-sufficient



All People have economic opportunities



All People's lives are culturally and recreationally enriched



All People trust government is efficient, effective, and fiscally sound

Commissioner Morris presents a proclamation recognizing the 50th Anniversary of Herzing University
May 6, 2015



The BOC met with Fulton County Mayors to discuss issues of mutual concern
March 25, 2015

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

On April 2, the Georgia General Assembly concluded the 2015 legislative session after considering significant legislation, including some that directly or indirectly affected Fulton County. While Fulton County was unsuccessful in passing all of our legislative priorities, other legislation was adopted that affected the County.

- **HB 595, Library System:** changes the Atlanta-Fulton County Library System to the Fulton County Library System, changes the composition of the Library Board of Trustees from 11 to 8 members, and changes the authority from the County Manager to the Library Board of Trustees for the hiring and supervision of the Library Director.
- **HB 655, Magistrate Court:** makes the Chief Magistrate Judge or his or her designee the court administrator of the Magistrate Court of Fulton County and gives the court administrator oversight over the budget of the Magistrate Court.
- **HB 170, Transportation Funding Act:** imposes new fees and increases to some current taxes to create \$900 million in revenue allocated for transportation purposes.
- **HB 213, Revisions to the MARTA Act:** repeals the 50/50 requirement on revenue used for operations and capital, changes the MARTA Board to include representation from Clayton County, gives voting privileges to the GRTA Executive Director, and staggers the terms of new Board members.
- **HB 106, TSPLOST:** allows counties to consider implementing a single county Transportation Special Local Option Sales Tax.
- **HB 202, Property Tax Appeals and Administration Reform:** revises processes and procedures regarding ad valorem taxation, assessment, and appeal.

FULTON COUNTY AMENDS THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

On May 20, 2015 the Board of Commissioners (BOC) amended the powers, duties and composition of the Audit Committee. This committee was established by the BOC in 2014 in order to assist Fulton County in achieving the core objectives for which all businesses strive: effectiveness and efficiency of operations, reliability of financial and management reporting, compliance with laws and regulations and safeguarding of assets.

The committee will be responsible for: reviewing the annual audit plan of the County Auditor, ensuring that the Auditor can perform his duties without any restrictions or limitations, overseeing the work of any outside public accounting firm hired by the County, and establishing procedures for complaints received by employees or any other source.

The BOC also reduced the number of members from 7 to 5. The membership will be composed of 2 members of the BOC and 3 citizens with expertise in the areas of accounting, auditing, internal control and local government operations.

Commissioner Morris participates in a Special Review Committee meeting with officials from Fulton County, Grady Health System, and the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority. The goal of the task force is to identify and eliminate the duplication of services among the various agencies, to provide collaborative care for patients and to reduce costs for all. May 5, 2015

FRESH & HUMAN SERVICES GRANTS

Every year the County provides funding to nonprofit organizations to carry out programs and direct services to children ages zero to 21 (FRESH Grants). The total amount awarded for 2015 is \$1,859,000. Organizations awarded funds for 2015 in District 3 are: **Child Development Association, Los Ninos Primero Inc., and Big Brother Big Sisters of Metro Atlanta.**

Additionally, Human Services Grants will be awarded to various organizations in the amount of \$3,603,000 for FY2015. These grants are to support the delivery of essential community services – Aging, Disabilities, Employment, HIV/AIDS, Homeless & Housing, and Youth & Families.



VISION FOR FULTON COUNTY

Chairman John Eaves made his first State of the County Address to business and community leaders, elected officials and employees of Fulton County on April 30, 2015 at the Loudermilk Center. Chairman Eaves was excited and enthusiastic about the future of Fulton County. He shared a video about what makes this county great and also shared his vision about what the future will hold for Fulton County. He spoke about transportation, education, smart justice, and public health. And most important, he spoke about being one Fulton County with all of our partners working together – “We can get a whole lot more done working together than going by ourselves. We are a great county, one county. Our best days are yet to come.”



L: Commissioner Morris greets Mr. Bob Shaw, Mayor Jere Wood, and Ms. Marva Bryan to the State of the County Address.



R: Commissioner Morris welcomes long-time friend, Atlanta City Councilwoman Mary Norwood with a hug.



EXECUTIVE TEAM AND BOARD APPOINTMENTS

In keeping with **Fulton County 1st in 3: IMPACT — SERVICE — EFFICIENCY (FCF3)**, County Manager Dick Anderson has begun appointing his executive team to improve efficiency and customer service in Fulton County. To date he has made the following appointments:

- Director of Purchasing – Felicia Strong-Whitaker
- Director of External Affairs – Jessica Corbitt
- Director of the Ryan White Program – Jeff Cheek
- Division Manager of Diversity & Civil Rights Compliance – Ann Harris

Anderson plans to have the full executive team in place this summer.

Commissioner Morris reappointed Dr. Michael Bell to the Fulton County Development Authority and appointed Ms. Priscilla Davis to the Fulton County Homeless Continuum of Care Board. Their appointments were approved by the BOC on May 6 and May 20, 2015, respectively.

LEE'S CORNER: CITYHOOD

There was much excitement during the 2015 General Assembly session involving the potential municipalization or incorporation of the only remaining portion of south Fulton County that is not yet part of a city.

The bill that would allow a vote on cityhood for the City of South Fulton appeared initially to have great momentum. Studies showed that the unincorporated area would be a viable city with adequate tax revenues to provide the city services to the area. Many who were instrumental in leading the negative vote in the cityhood referendum in 2006 now support cityhood for the area. But then an arguably competing bill proposed by the city of Atlanta was introduced, which would have annexed by legislation large portions of that area into the city of Atlanta. Both bills stalled and were not passed.

Currently, residents of portions of unincorporated south Fulton County are circulating petitions to be annexed into the City of Atlanta via the 60% petition process. Those petitions are being challenged by other residents of those areas. There are significant school system issues between Atlanta Public Schools and Fulton County Schools that would result from such an annexation, among many other matters. In the meantime, property owners in other parts of the unincorporated area of south Fulton County are considering or taking steps to annex into other existing cities in south Fulton County.

Why is all of this important to people of Buckhead, Sandy Springs, and midtown Atlanta (the 3rd Fulton County Commission district)? Why should any of us care whether these areas become part of Atlanta, Union City, Chattahoochee Hills, a new city of South Fulton, or any of the other cities in south Fulton?

The answer to those questions involves the fact that Fulton County provides city-like services to the unincorporated areas of the county, through a "Special Services District" (SSD) fund. Taxpayers throughout the county pay county taxes into the General Fund, and taxpayers in unincorporated areas pay additional amounts into the SSD, analogous to the city taxes those of us in Atlanta or Sandy Springs pay to our particular city.

Much of the infighting on the Commission historically has been over the accounting for and spending decisions between General Fund and SSD. Much of the anger in north Fulton was about unfairness in the spending from the SSD and perceived subsidies to unincorporated south Fulton from the General Fund. County government is arguably more complicated than it needs to be because it is involved in police, fire, zoning, code enforcement and other city-like services, now only in south Fulton, with attendant overhead in the General Fund that costs everyone in Fulton County additional taxes. I share the concerns over the fairness of how the county accounts for and treats revenues and spending between General Fund and SSD. I think the county should get out of the business of providing city-like services at all, which will happen when there are no unincorporated areas in Fulton County.

My position is that people should have the right to decide what government they want, in a fair and open process. I do not care in which city any particular property owner resides. But I firmly believe that residents of south Fulton would be better served by being in a city, whichever one it may be. Representatives deciding city service needs and zoning matters in south Fulton should live closer to those citizens, rather than in Alpharetta, Johns Creek, Milton, Roswell, Sandy Springs and Buckhead. The same factors that led to the desire for the cities of Sandy Springs, Milton and Johns Creek, exist in unincorporated south Fulton.

But I fervently hope that the existing cities do not pick off the "plum" tax-paying areas of the unincorporated south Fulton, leaving a remaining unincorporated area that is NOT viable as a new city. That would not serve the citizens of Sandy Springs, Atlanta, or anywhere else in the county, well. It would leave Fulton County government providing city-like services of fire, police, zoning, etc., to a small part of the county, for the indefinite future, perhaps forever, with the continued distrust by some that they are being treated unfairly by their county government, and the continued divisiveness between north and south.



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